

## **Historic, archived document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



PROGRAM..... YOUNG FOLKS' PROGRAM

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
NOV 16 1927

RELEASE..... Fri. Nov. 18/27.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

No. 7. The Magic Hen.

ANNOUNCEMENT: This is the day for Uncle Abe, of the Department of Agriculture, to visit his little nephews. He is reading to Sonny over there now. Jim doesn't seem to be very interested -- he's not paying much attention to the reading. That's -- his Uncle has shut the book and is speaking to him, now -----

\*\*\*\*\*

UNCLE ABE: How did you like that one, Jim? Sonny thought it was great, didn't you Sonny?

JIM: Ah, "Jack and the Beanstalk" is all right for Sonny. It's a kid story --- There never was any hen that laid golden eggs!

UNCLE ABE: How about those hens out there in your father's yard?

JIM: They just lay ordinary eggs ---

UNCLE ABE: Yes, but those eggs are valuable. And those hens lay a lot of them. A billion dollars worth of chickens and eggs are produced in the United States in a year's time. Some hens lay one thousand or more eggs in their life time. Jack of the Beanstalk's hen that laid the golden eggs doesn't seem much more wonderful than those chickens out there, when you compare them with the little red jungle fowl of India.

JIM: What's the Little Red Jungle Fowl?

UNCLE ABE: That's the wild bird from which our domesticated chickens probably came. The original home of the Jungle Fowl was in the bamboo jungles of south and central India and the islands to the south and eastward. The wild birds look not unlike small Brown Leghorns.

JIM: And did White Leghorns and Plymouth Rocks and Buff Cochins and all the other kinds of chickens all come from the Little Red Jungle Fowl.

UNCLE ABE: Yes, the Little Red Jungle Fowl were probably the original parents of them all. All the different colors, and sizes, and shapes of modern chickens were probably developed by careful selection and matings to bring out special traits. As the Little Red Jungle Fowl was red and black, you can see what marvelous changes have been brought about in this way.

JIM: How did chickens get over here from India, anyway?

UNCLE ABE: That's a long story. It goes back hundreds, even thousands of years.

1914

June 1st

Received of Mr. J. H. Smith  
the sum of \$100.00  
for the purchase of land.

Witness my hand and seal this 1st day of June 1914.

John H. Smith

John H. Smith

Received of Mr. J. H. Smith  
the sum of \$100.00  
for the purchase of land.

Witness my hand and seal this 1st day of June 1914.

John H. Smith

John H. Smith

John H. Smith

John H. Smith



R-Y. F. 11/18/27.

JIM: Tell me about it.

UNCLE ABE: Well, to understand what happened, you should remember that two main families of chickens were developed from the Little Red Jungle Fowl. Traders carried chickens to the westward and to the eastward, until they were gradually spread over most of Europe and Asia. The people in Asia became most interested in chickens for meat, so they developed big-bodied chickens which were best suited to produce meat. The people to the west, especially around the Mediterranean Sea, wanted chickens principally for their eggs; so they developed egg-laying breeds which were just about half the size of the Asiatic chickens ---- but the thing which helped get people of different countries interested in chickens were the chicken fights.

JIM: Tell me about the chicken fights?

UNCLE ABE: Well, chicken-fights were probably one of the chief reasons for domesticating the Little Red Jungle Fowl in the first place. People in India got to training the cocks or roosters especially to fight. They thought it was great sport to watch the fighting. About 2500 years ago, however, Persia made war on India and conquered it. In India, the Persians learned about cock-fighting. They took game chickens back to Persia with them. Two hundred years later, Persia was conquered by Greek armies and the Greek soldiers carried game chickens back to Greece. From India, to Persia, to Greece, to Rome the sport of cock-fighting gradually spread westward. It spread into central Europe and England. Later, when America began to be settled, cock-fighting became an important sport over here.

JIM: Didn't they raise chickens for anything except for fighting?

UNCLE ABE: Oh, yes. Farmers early began keeping chickens for meat and eggs, and feathers. In Japan, for instance, the high officials of the government used to wear long feathers as decorations, so the Japanese developed the Yokohomas, the roosters of which have tails 12 to 15 feet long. In Italy, the great egg-laying Leghorns were developed. What cock-fighting did was to advertise chicken raising, and teach folks to select chickens carefully so as to develop them for the use to which they were to be put. But more and more, people came to think chicken-fights were not only cruel to the chickens but bad for the people that watched them. Finally, laws were passed to stop them, and people who had been interested in game and fancy chickens started holding shows. That was about seventy-five or eighty years ago. Then something happened which really marks the beginning of the modern poultry business.

JIM: What was that, Uncle Abe?

UNCLE ABE: You remember I told you that in Asia chickens were chiefly developed for meat. In China, especially, chickens twice the size of the European egg-layers had been developed. But eighty years ago, China was an almost unknown country to the rest of the world. Few people in Europe or America had ever seen any of China's giant chickens. Then China was opened up to trade with the rest of the world. Giant Cochins and Brahmans were brought to this country and to England. These gigantic chickens created a sensation, when they were shown at the poultry shows. Suddenly the western world learned of these chickens twice the size of many of those they knew. The giant Cochins did for poultry raising what Lindbergh did for aviation. They suddenly set people talking and thinking chickens. Thousands of



W. F. 11/13/27.

Some called the "hen fever" as the new chicken craze was called.

A little before this, Leghorns, the great egg layers from Italy had been brought to this country. American chicken raisers started their great contributions to the world's poultry business. They not only improved the Leghorns, so that they laid more eggs than they did in Italy, but they set about producing new breeds of chickens which would combine egg-laying with good size for meat. As a result, we have such general-purpose chickens as the Plymouth Rocks, Wyandottes, Rhode Island Reds, and Jersey Black Giants.

So you see, Jim, we have giants and valuable egg layers just as wonderful as those Jack found at the top of the beanstalk.

# # #

